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Elector

A LETTER
TO THE
ELECTORS
OF THE
COUNTY OF HANTS,

In which the causes that led to the Hon. J. Howe's
Abandonment of Repeal are explained and
put in their true light.

BY AN ELECTOR.

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To the Electors of the County of Hants.

GENTLEMEN—

You have at present a duty to perform which surpasses in importance any that you have ever discharged as an electoral body. It requires, therefore, attention proportioned to its importance. Howsoever you may act, it is sure to affect yourselves immediately, or at any rate very soon, and its effects will be felt by your posterity. Should you err in choosing a wrong representative for the Dominion Parliament, do not for a moment imagine that it is a small matter; and should you be so fortunate as to elect the proper person, you will do a blessed thing for yourselves, for the Province, and for posterity, and history will celebrate the wisdom of your judgment. Everything must or ought to be done by you with calmness and after mature deliberation. But I am ready to admit that this is a time when it is peculiarly difficult to act with calmness. The very greatness of the event to some extent disturbs the mind, and makes us liable to be swayed more by prejudice than by reason; and it is with a view to diminish this danger that I, though with much diffidence, take the liberty of addressing to you some reflections which ought to influence you in making choice of your representative. And I do it the more readily, because I see unprincipled politicians using their best exertions to arouse those angry passions which every good citizen would wish to

see allayed on such an occasion. But to them it is a small matter whether you are led to commit an irretrievable blunder, provided they thereby secure some selfish ends or gain a party triumph. The election over, everything of moment to these adventurers is finished; but your concernment then scarcely begins, and, who can calculate its end! In the minds of some of the electors a prejudice exists against Mr. Howe, and although it cannot be strong, as it is merely a shrub transplanted from Halifax, which has not yet taken root, I shall not pass it over with the contempt it perhaps deserves, but examine its character, and show you how essential it will be for you to discard it utterly from your minds. It is not surprising indeed that a prejudice should have arisen against the Hon. Joseph Howe; because to have to bear such prejudices is one of the misfortunes attending a far-seeing wisdom that boldly utters its convictions. A similar prejudice arose against the great Edmund Burke, which cost him his seat—a similar prejudice arose against Sir Robert Peel when he became the judicious advocate of Free Trade—a similar prejudice arose against the present Prime Minister of England in that University that gloried in his genius—and a similar prejudice arose against Lord Macaulay, the most brilliant of writers and the purest of statesmen, in the capital of Scotland. Everybody knows how the electors of Edinburgh afterwards repented their temerity in rejecting him, and how they made the most honorable amends in their power by re-electing him as their representative in Parliament, without putting him to the trouble of a can-

vass, or even a desire expressed on his part to be elected. You will repent likewise, if you now vote amiss: but the Hon. Mr. Howe is not in the prime of youth, and afterwards your contrition may be able only to manifest itself in useless self-reproaches.

The *Morning Chronicle*, Mr. Howe's ablest opponent, attempts to make a strong point out of the honorable gentleman's inconsistency in first seeking, and then abandoning Repeal; but it is an easy matter to show that this argument is weak in any one's hand, and is perfectly suicidal when wielded by the *Chronicle*. For if inconsistency, in [changing from one view to another, be bad, who so guilty as this organ of opinion, that, ever since its inception, was filled with praises of the Hon. Mr. Howe's abilities and virtues, and now turns about to batter him with volleys of opprobrious epithets? If change of opinion be necessarily wrong, then the *Chronicle*, instead of doing the hon. gentleman all the harm in its power, should get its best contributors to write their best contributions in his favor. But the fact is, there could scarcely be a greater mistake than to suppose that consistency in the continued pursuit of one line of conduct, is necessarily the only way to be consistent with high principle. The true man is not he who never changes his opinion, but he who exercises his best faculties to discover at all times what is true, and then acts upon what he believes to be the truth, even should it be in opposition to his whole past career. In proportion as he succeeds in discerning what is true, he is a wise man, and as he acts upon it he is a good one. Before we condemn a change of opinion, it is therefore essentially

requisite that we consider the nature of the change and the motives that led to it. Your duty demands, then, an examination of the causes that led to Mr. Howe's present attitude towards Repeal. It is upon a misconception of these causes that the present opposition to him is based.

It is said that Mr. Howe changed his opinion in order that he might get "a situation;" not because he believed that Repeal was hopeless, and agitation in its behalf could only injure the interests of the industrious citizen.

Now, if this be correct, then Mr. Howe deserves all, and more than all, the hard things that have been said of him, and is fit not to be the representative of an honest, intelligent, and industrious constituency like that of Hants, but only to be the spokesman of a gang of pickpockets. If in that case he were not merely elected, but if he even got a dozen votes, I would look upon it with regret. On the other hand, if there be not an atom of truth in this allegation, does not any one who harbors ill will towards the hon. gentleman on account of it, commit a sin against his God by hating whom he should love and respect? Everything in Mr. Howe's past life, both as a public man and a private gentleman, convinces me that nothing short of a miracle could have induced him to make the change of which his enemies accuse him. And I do not believe in miracles. None of you believes that if he throws a stone into the air it will fly towards the moon instead of falling back towards the earth, or that the Avon may flow back some day towards the mountains from which it came. If these things

were to happen, they would be miracles in the material world, in which you or I do not believe; and a miracle in the moral world is just as unlikely to happen as one in the material. Yet Mr. Howe's conversion, if it be of the kind alleged, would be a miracle, in which you would not believe, were it not for the barefaced assurances of a number of seemingly respectable people, who say that they *do* believe it. Who would believe that a general, who displayed on a thousand battle fields all the higher qualities of a military genius—fortitude in the midst of dangers, sagacity in foreseeing, and promptitude in acting—should all of a sudden fail, even in the vulgar courage of a private soldier; or that a clergyman of the Gospel, who passed his youth with the purest morality, and his manhood in acts of self-denial prompted by the purest piety, should in his old age become a skulking adulterer? And yet incredible as these results would be they are nothing more so than what some people would have you believe concerning Mr. Howe: Ever since he began to take a part in public affairs, were his best efforts not constantly devoted to the cause of the people? Did he not brave the menaces of the powerful, and withstand the strongest temptations that money can create, at a time when one is most likely to be seduced by it, to serve his country? Has he not been the principal party engaged in passing a series of measures for the establishment of, and resisting a series of encroachments on, the liberties of the people, any *one* of which would give its author an honorable place in history? We see the wisest English historians prodigal in their encomiums of

Hampden because he refused to pay ship money ;
 of the seven bishops because they would not read
 the King's declaration ; and of McIntosh for his un-
 flinching advocacy of the liberty of the press. But
 Mr. Howe has done for Nova Scotia, not merely so
 much as one of these did for England, but more
 than all of them put together. He set the freedom
 of the press on a sure and permanent foundation—
 he procured Responsible Government for the colony
 —he corrected innumerable abuses that crept into
 every public department in the Province—and last
 but not least he destroyed the old corrupt municipal
 system of Halifax. He thus secured Nova Scotia
 for ever [from government in any department by
 oligarchies, and we cannot fully estimate the bless-
 ings, certainly we [can never repay the instrument,
 of so great a deliverance. These oligarchies, anni-
 hilated by Mr. Howe, have all the conceivable evils
 of government inherent in them. They are neither
 controlled by public sentiment nor directed by an
 enlightened conscience. They will sanction the
 most pernicious measures, because no one feels the
 responsibility of an act to which he was only a minor
 party. The public service is looked upon as a
 means of supporting themselves and their relations
 upon a splendid charity ; and if ever they should
 extend their patronage to an outsider, it is only
 after he has proved, by meanness of conduct and
 and profession, that he is fitted to become the un-
 scrupulous instrument of an unscrupulous authority.
 But such a clique is always powerful, and can never
 be matched except by genius, by integrity, and by
 elevated patriotism. But Mr. Howe did more than

reform governmental abuses for Nova Scotia. I need not enumerate his various labors in behalf of railway and steamboat communication, agricultural improvements, and the extension of her trade and commerce, because they are too well known to require a rehearsal. What, I ask, could then support a man in the discharge of such duties to his country, but the purest devotion to her cause, especially when we consider that all the while high places and abundance of money were ready to become his if he would only cease from his labors of love? A Governorship he could get almost any time, and at a period of life when money is most alluring, he rejected with scorn a bribe of £50,000 if he would only let the people work for themselves. I believe a man of Mr. Howe's means who could do this, to be incorruptible on the score of money. And is the reward of all these noble services to be not that Nova Scotians will not confer an office of dignity and emolument upon their benefactor, but that they will do what in them lies to deprive him of such when conferred by others, and believe that a life so pure in youth and manhood has in its older days become base and treacherous? Never, never, will they bring such an ugly stain upon their national character; because a people that are as deservedly respected as widely as they are known, are not likely to commit an act which would make them as widely despised. But I take another view of the matter, to show you how impossible it is there could be any truth in this foolish story about abandoning Repeal to get "a situation." When Mr. Howe accepted the situation, either he knew that Repeal

was hopeless, or he believed that further efforts would obtain it. Now, what would have been the consequence to the honorable gentleman had his exertions as a Repealer proved successful? Why! would not that be, that he should succeed in demolishing Dr. Tupper's scheme of Confederation, in baffling all the arts of the Canadians to maintain the scheme, in producing a compulsory conversion in the British Parliament, and finally become the idol of the Anti-Union party in the Province? This would have been to raise him to a pinnacle of glory to which he has not yet attained, and to have won for him a fame more extended than is likely to be secured by his whole previous career, distinguished as that is. But fame is not all that he would get along with Repeal. He would obtain, not merely the Premiership of the Province, but if he chose he might become a pluralist, and [thereby treble, aye even quadruple his present salary as President of the Council.

It could not, therefore, be for the sake of "a situation" that he abandoned Repeal, nor was it for the sake of fame either, because he never expected anything from the expression of his present views, beyond the acknowledgment of his honesty? Since the realization of any hope for Repeal would have been immensely more advantageous to him in point of fame and emolument, than the position which he now holds, we are compelled, therefore, to look for another cause than the love of place—or his separation from the redoubtable League. The other cause is, the other horn of our dilemma, viz., that he knew that Repeal was

DEAD, and as a wise man and a true patriot, he then felt it his first duty to turn it to the best advantage for his country. And lastly, Mr. Howe over and again, challenged his present opponents to show any mode by which Repeal was even *likely* to be obtained, but no answer. The fact is, they were as convinced of its hoplessness as he was, but they had not the courage to say so. They were also quite willing to go on agitating, and puddling, and scolding, in the intervals of their business hours, because it pleased and cost them nothing. And mark more particularly, the self-denial of these patriotic politicians. They deemed it expedient to keep Mr. Howe away from Halifax altogether, and were anxious to send him to Washington in some capacity fitted to make himself and the Province the butt and the ridicule of civilized humanity for years to come. Do not, however, blame them for the absurdity of this, because the fault is nature's, in having made men so stupid as to believe this to be good policy and sound sense; but you have a right, to blame them for the manner in which this stupid piece of business was to be paid for. Did these disinterested statesmen put their hands into their pockets to defray the expenses? No! nor one cent of them; but like all men of that class, proved themselves exceedingly liberal with what did not belong to them. They were to pay everything out of the taxes paid by you, and which you yourselves require for so many useful purposes. And this leads me to another point on which some good people require information. They say Mr. Howe should have continued

the agitation longer. If this were a difficult matter to answer, I would reply, that Mr. Howe's sagacity knew best when the agitation should cease; but the reason for discontinuance is obvious to the smallest reflection. Mr. Howe saw that there was a double evil connected with the further existence of a Repeal party. The first was, that it drew the attention of the people away from their business, and the second, that the public money, instead of being applied to promote peace and industry, would be squandered upon more than useless embassies and delegations.

But now it is admitted by all sensible men, that Confederation is an established fact, and that we must make the best of it—not only the Province as a whole, but Hants in particular. And since the County cannot send every body to Ottawa, her duty is to send the best Representative possible. This is brought to a narrow issue, because it lies in selecting the best of two men—Monson Goudge, Esq., and the Hon. Joseph Howe. Mr. Goudge is a very estimable man, of respectable talent, and unblemished character; but by no means fitted to represent you at the present crisis. A minute comparison between himself and the Hon. Mr. Howe is not likely to be instituted by any one. His friends, it is hoped, have not the weakness, nor his opponents, the cruelty to do that. Suffice it to say, that Mr. Howe has been the leading speaker at meetings in Nova Scotia, in Canada, in the United States, and in England, where Mr. Goudge would not be called upon to move a vote of thanks; that he delivered more good speeches than Mr. Goudge

ever read, and refuted arguments which Mr. Goudge could not comprehend. What you require now, is a man who is thoroughly experienced in the principles of political economy, and knows all the details of finance; who knows what the wants of Nova Scotia are, and can plead for them successfully on the floor of the Parliament in Ottawa. Send Mr. Howe, who possesses all these qualifications in an eminent degree, and your interests are safe in his hands. If you send Mr. Goudge, he will have to learn every thing; and you have yet to learn what are his capabilities of acquiring political knowledge. This is not a time to play at "heads or tails," but to act surely.

I remain,

Your obedient Servant,

AN ELECTOR.